

deeply France is attached to the U.N., in general, and the Security Council, in particular. Thank you very much.

President Clinton. Thank you.

Q. Mr. President, do you believe the Russians lied to you, sir?

Q. [Inaudible].

President Clinton. We're going to be out there some more tomorrow.

Gun Control Legislation

Q. [Inaudible]—NRA may win with the—[inaudible]—

President Clinton. I know. I got up at 5 a.m. and started making calls this morning. I'm doing my best.

Q. What's your view?

President Clinton. I don't know yet. I'm not close enough to have a good count.

Al Gore's Announcement of Candidacy

Q. How do you think Al Gore did yesterday?

President Clinton. Wonderful. I thought he was terrific.

NOTE: The President's 175th news conference began at 11:24 a.m. in the Garden at Elysee Palace. President Chirac spoke in French, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. In his remarks, President Clinton referred to Bernadette Chirac, wife of President Chirac; Prime Minister-elect Ehud Barak of Israel; Defense Minister Igor Sergeev and Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov of Russia; President Arpad Goncz and Prime Minister Viktor Orban of Hungary; President Slobodan Milosevic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro); Louise Arbour, independent chief prosecutor, International War Crimes Tribunal; Lt. Gen. Mike Jackson, British Royal Army, Commander, Kosovo International Security Force; and President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this news conference.

Memorandum on Strengthening Our Commitment to Service Through Voluntary Opportunities

June 17, 1999

Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies

Subject: Strengthening Our Commitment to Service Through Voluntary Opportunities

Volunteer community service is a great American tradition and a profound expression of the civic values that bind us together as a Nation. Nowhere is the spirit of volunteerism more alive than among employees of the Federal Government, thousands of whom serve their country with dedication at work and as volunteers in their local communities. On April 22, 1998, I directed Federal departments and agencies to expand community service opportunities for Federal employees by making maximum use of existing flexibility in work scheduling policies. Today, I am encouraging all departments and agencies with operations in the District of Columbia to apply those policies so that their D.C.-based employees can take advantage of a vitally important community service opportunity: helping D.C. public school students become better readers this summer.

From June 28 through August 6, an estimated 30,000 D.C. school children with low test scores will be in mandatory and enrichment summer school programs run by the D.C. Public School system. Students whose scores do not markedly improve risk being held back a grade. This is part of the District's ambitious plan to end social promotion while also giving children the extra help they need to meet higher standards—the kind of positive reform I have called on all school districts to adopt. As the District's largest employer, the Federal Government has a unique opportunity to help children improve their scores and rejoin their classmates this fall.

That is why I am pleased that the Corporation for National and Community Service is assisting Federal departments and agencies

in recruiting 1,500 Federal employees to become volunteer reading tutors through the *D.C. Reads This Summer* program. Employees who choose to sign up with *D.C. Reads This Summer* will receive training and be able to work one-on-one with students once a week for 6 weeks at one of 32 school- and community-based tutoring sites around the city. I encourage departments and agencies that have not already done so to inform employees of this rewarding volunteer opportunity and assist where possible in transporting employees to and from the sites. I also ask that you continue to encourage and support employees who choose to volunteer through other community programs. In addition to *D.C. Reads*, there are many excellent programs being run through libraries and religious and community centers throughout the D.C. area. Finally, I encourage you to maintain or strengthen any preexisting partnerships that your department or agency may already have with D.C. or other local school systems.

William J. Clinton

Remarks on Gun Control Legislation and an Exchange With Reporters in Paris

June 17, 1999

I would just like to make a brief statement. Sometime today the United States Congress will be called upon to vote on whether to close the gun show loophole. It seems to me there's a very simple, direct question. If we close the loophole and do background checks in a comprehensive fashion at the gun shows, will we succeed, as we have with the Brady bill, in keeping more guns out of the hands of criminals and others who shouldn't have them—at every little inconvenience to legitimate gun owners.

The answer to that question is, yes. Everyone knows the answer to that question is yes. Therefore, I hope that this vote will be cast by Congress in the spirit that has gripped the country after the tragedy at Littleton, thinking about those children and other children that we can still save.

Once again, I think that the gun lobby is just wrong about this. And we've seen several

gun manufacturers come forward and say that the gun show loophole ought to be closed. We've seen several individual Republicans, and members of the NRA, come forward and say this. They're just wrong here. And I hope and pray that Congress will do the right thing.

Q. Mr. President, have you talked to Mr. Dingell and why is he doing this to the Democrats?

The President. I don't think he thinks he's doing this to the Democrats. I believe that this is something on which we have a profound disagreement on. I believe that John Dingell believes he's doing the right thing. But I know that most Members of Congress in both parties agree that the gun show loophole, if closed, would keep more guns out of the hands of criminals. That's what they think. And of course, we have about 80 percent of the Democrats in favor of this, maybe more, maybe 90 percent—I don't know but way—the vast majority. And most of the Republicans are voting the other way, the vast majority. They feel a certain amount of gratitude to the NRA for putting them in the majority in the House in the first place, by frightening people over the Brady bill and the assault weapons ban. And I understand that.

But now we've got 5 years of experience with the Brady bill and the assault weapons ban. All lawful gun owners can still go hunting, can still engage in sport shooting, but we kept 400,000 guns out of the wrong hands with the Brady bill. And now they know that a lot of people with criminal backgrounds are trying to get guns at gun shows and flea markets and things of that kind. It is time to close the loophole—it's a simple, simple, straightforward question on the merits. And if everyone voted on the merits it would carry by 80 percent. And I think we all know that.

NATO-Russia Negotiations on Kosovo

Q. Mr. President, can you report any progress at all in the talks with the Russians and resolving the situation of their role in Kosovo?

The President. I just got an update. They're still talking. We haven't resolved all the issues, but they have made pretty good progress today. I'm pleased, and I would urge